

THEIR IDIOSYNCRASIES.

BILL NIX BOYER SOME LITTLE CURIOSITIES OF AMERICANA.

The Undertaker's Confession—Faintness in New York City—An Alleged Illinois A. Squire and His Marriage License.

(Copyright by Edgar W. Nye.)

ONE FOOT.

A lawyer in the parlor of a west town residence yesterday showed me a copy of a curious document illustrating the crude methods of early times in the West, and also the light and velvet touch with which social laws were administered when the country was new.

"To all the World, Greeting: Know ye that John Smith and Penny Nye are hereby united together as man and wife in the presence of the Hon. Judge of the Peace in the County of Chester, Pa., and when my commission comes I am to marry them for good and date them back to the 1st day of March."

"This is a bona fide document, and shows not only a wonderful command of language and an artistic method of word painting, but illustrates also the fact that a Justice of the Peace once possesses a kind and gentle heart."

"We were speaking after this of the incident and incidentally of the terrible boom in the undertaking business, when a quiet old gentleman across the street said he was surprised to notice that in some of the cities it was reported that the undertakers could not keep up with the work or fill the orders made on them."

"There is no such thing as a free lunch," he said, "that ought to be a lesson for an emergency any easier than the undertaking business. I used to be an undertaker myself, but reformed two years ago and retired. I am able to live without it now, and I am willing to state that the death rate must increase a good deal faster than it has before under any need be hurried or crowded very much."

"In the first place, it would surprise you to know how cheaply they can make a coffin. I've known a bereaved relative to pay for a handsomely fitted up and thoroughly lined coffin, and get a pine box with knots in it, lined mostly with flannel, confected paper and covered with cheap black cloth. I had seen in a coffin factory for three years, and we could make one of these receptacles about as cheaply as you could a peach basket. A coffin that is covered, as the most of them are now, is a pretty cheap affair before it gets its dress suit on. I used lumber that couldn't be used anywhere else, the knots were so large and liable to drop out. We, of course, knew the sizes of our coffins, and so aimed to arrange it that if there was a large knot hole, we would work it on a large person so that he couldn't sit through on his way to the grave."

"There is a very good profit in this business indeed, and the deeper the grief of the family the more you can stock it to the detriment of the price without being discovered. Cremation was all that we were ever afraid of. That would have knocked us all to pieces, and some day it will do it to us. The price is now so high that it is tempting to the shrewd American undertaker."

"We got \$5 for a little white caquet once. It was marked 'One Foot' and I myself for charging that price, for we cleared \$70 on it, and I couldn't eat my meals all day. I took it up to the house where I could see the people like other burglars, who climb over a corpse or two in order to get a few dollars. There was white craps on the door, and all was hushed about the house. People who passed walked on their toes, and held their own children a little tighter by the hand till they got that far that death himself might yet be lurking behind a tree box in the neighborhood."

"Well, I went back after I'd delivered the caquet, and next day I found that it was for a little dog that had never been deodorized during his life, and who had not retained even in death."

"The mistress told me that he was a very talented dog and knew as much as she did herself. Her bursting heart was still sore, and so I did not contradict her."

"I had an odd experience when last in New York, and I will tell it because it may interest others who have passed through a similar one. I had been up to meet a large and spellbound audience of people, most of whom hung on my lips for quite a while. I had gone up town with friends who paid my elevated fare and gave me a good night at One Hundred and Twenty-fifth street. I was in full evening dress and the flush of social success was on my face. The ticket man told me to go away and give those who had money a show. I went away."

"You know how earnestly you feel in your pockets under the circumstances. Finally it was clear that I had no money in those clothes."

"I thought I would take my bag down stairs, where I would be least disturbed, and open it. Very likely I would find some money in my working clothes. I got in the shadow of an iron post and opened the bag, and when I saw a carefully, yet earnestly, I went through the garments as people come along and looked over my shoulder to see what kind of clothing I had. I did not find any money, but I came near being arrested twice while I was ascertaining the fact."

"I put back most of the clothes in a hurried manner, and then I clutched wildly at my hair, wondering what to do next. I could not ring for a messenger, or if I did I could not pay him when he came, just then a little boy with purple lips and watery, hungry eyes came along and begged me to buy an evening paper of him. He saw that I was richly clothed, and no doubt he had had my princely income so, felt that he had. He put his cold eye against my hand and said he would buy me two good papers for one cent. But I could not give him a cent. Then he offered to carry my bag for me, said no, I thought it was doing me much good to carry my luggage that way. It was bringing back the bits of health to my cheeks. He cried and said he hadn't had anything to eat all day. I believed it, so I looked like it. I felt in my vest pocket and found a trochee. I gave it to him. He said he would eat it. Then I took it and he said he would eat it. I looked at him, but I am not. I cannot even call

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